The Rothbard-Rockwell Report
TRIPLE R

THE "VIPER MILITIA" SCAM

Vin Suprynowicz

If you believe the feds, the crackdown on Arizona's dreaded "Viper Militia" saved us from unspeakable acts of terrorism on U.S. soil. It was one of the most publicized sting operations of modern times, an example of why we need a federal police force roaming the nation busting up militia conspiracies.

But for those who actually followed the trial of the only Viper Militia defendant to face a jury, the case represents a striking example of government duplicity, despotic overreach, and judicial oppression. The case may also be a watershed even in the struggle to preserve the right of private Americans to bear arms.

The arrest of the 14-member Viper Militia took place July 1, 1996. Two members of the group turned out to be paid government informants. Ten other members pleaded guilty in hopes of a lighter sentence. For example, member Gary Bauer, Vietnam veteran and Purple Heart recipient, pleaded guilty to multiple counts of owning weapons the government taught him to use, and is now serving nine years in a Federal Correctional Facility in Oregon. One member awaits trial and another has already been tried.

After the arrest, President Clinton spoke from the White House lawn, saying "I'd like to begin today by saluting the law enforcement officers who made arrests in Arizona yesterday to avert a terrible terrorist attack." The government spin was that the Vipers had specific plans to bomb government buildings and commercial television towers.

But that story started to erode almost immediately. Testifying at a pre-release hearing in Phoenix July 7, ATF case agent Steven Ott told the court his snitch "felt there was absolutely no plan to conduct any bombings of these buildings at that time," which is why the ATF never informed any occupants that they were in any danger.

By July 14, 1996, reporter Louis Sahagun of the anti-gun *Los Angeles Times* was reporting "The Viper case now threatens to backfire on federal agencies that heralded it as a breakthrough in the war against domestic terrorists."

Judge Earl H. Carroll let half the defendants go home "on their own recognizance" that day—no bail required. One defendant, Chuck Knight, still drives around Phoenix a free man today, running what's left of his air conditioner business, as he awaits sentencing. Is this the way we treat dangerous terrorists?

Ott also admitted under oath that his undercover snitch in the Viper Team had urged the other members to rob banks to further their cause, but that they all refused. Such a leadership role did the undercover state Game & Fish informant take that there was even "talk" of electing him the organization's leader, Ott testified. "We told him, 'Absolutely no'," Ott said, though the snitch was apparently still allowed to provide a place for the group to meet.

The defendant who has already been tried is named Chuck Knight, a 47-year-old air conditioning installer and Vietnam-era Army veteran. Two weeks after the trial began, the jury began its deliberations on the single charge of "conspiracy to make or possess unregistered destructive devices."

What "overt acts" was Knight accused of committing as part of the Arizona militia group? Standing guard while other militia members practiced blowing up sand dunes with homemade explosives out in the desert, and participating in a discussion during which the Vipers agreed to buy some blasting caps.

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INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

✦ **Light up that cigarette,** one and all, for rebellion runs in the blood of every American. The government has declared a war on tobacco, which means a war on your rights. Fight back by buying a pack of Marlboros or unfiltered Camels. In doing so, you will join many young people across America who have gotten the message the government doesn't like smoking, and, therefore: what are we waiting for? Oddly, the FDA attempt to regulate nicotine like a drug will only speed up the counterrevolution. Remember the run on handguns produced by the impending Brady Bill? Try increasing cigarette taxes, and we'll see stockpiling like never before. Forget cartons. We're talking crates.

✦ **Ha, Ha, said the nation's press over the Southern Baptists' decision to boycott Disney,** but Disney is feeling the heat. "Hercules" is a flopperoo at the box office, attendance at its theme parks is down compared to previous growth rates, and its stock is increasingly in doubt. In fact, the Baptists' decision was a disaster for Disney. Moreover, it was the right decision: who else is willing to stand up to the present management, which is determined to squander decades of bourgeois goodwill that the great paleolibertarian Walt Disney worked to build up?

✦ **Puerto Ricans are "fat, squat, ugly, dusky, dirty, and unbelievably loud,"** according to the world's only billionaire gossip columnist, "Taki" or Peter Theodoracopulos (*The Spectator*, June 14, 1997). "Puerto Rican pride has to be the greatest of all oxymorons. It ruined my last weekend in the Bagel, as two million Puerto Ricans invaded Fifth Avenue for their annual Puerto Rican pride parade. Never have I seen a more motley collection.... None of them spoke English except for two words: fuck and motherfucker. They turned Manhattan into Palermo faster than you can say spic.

"'We're celebrating the enormous contribution of Puerto Ricans to America,' said Mayor Rudy Guiliani. In a civilized society, this abuse of language would carry the death penalty, but we are, after all, living in the age of Clinton. If ever there was a case for generalities, the Puerto Ricans are it. There has never been–nor will there ever be–a single positive contribution by a Puerto Rican outside of receiving American welfare and beating the system....

"Listening to the politicians groveling for votes, you'd think Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Mozart, Beethoven, Goethe, and Shakespeare were all Puerto Ricans. Never have I seen a ghastlier group–but then I am never in the Big Bagel during the gay and lesbian parade. Which brings me to the point I wish to make. Why in Hell should the taxpayer carry the load for a bunch of semi-savages to march down Fifth Avenue and turn it into a mini-San Juan? Ditto for the perverts."

✦ **"Sickening British Magazine Sparks New Firestorm,"** reported the *New York Post* (June 29, 1997). "Mayor Guiliani, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and several top politicians have demanded that Taki and [*The Spectator*] issue an apology for the stunning comments about Puerto Ricans and their annual parade here.... 'I am sickened by this kind of hatred,' said Rep. Nydia Valazquez (D-NY)... 'Reprehensible...disgusting,'" added the mayor.

"It's the second time in three years that the British *Spectator*" has "sparked such massive outrage." In "October 1994, the magazine published 'Kings of the Deal,' an article by writer William Cash that charged that Jews had conspired to control Hollywood. Cash described Jews as 'fiercely competitive' and 'compulsive storytellers and talented negotiators' who withheld jobs from non-Jews.

"The article prompted seething Hollywood stars including Tom Cruise, Barbra Streisand, Kirk Douglas, Kevin Costner, and Steven Spielberg to write an open letter of condemnation. The stars compared the hatred in Cash's views with the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust."

✦ **Why is the Christian right in a frenzy** about foreign religious persecution? Many of us had suspicions, but the *New Republic* (July 7, 1997) has confirmed them. Jacob Heilbrunn reports that neoliberals and neocons (particularly Bill Kristol) see

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this issue as the perfect way to redirect the attention of right-wing political activists. They will shift from domestic issues to foreign issues to bolster the case for a globalist foreign policy. As usual, Christian right activists have taken the bait. Thanks to the usual mix of payoffs and public rewards, they are flipped out about real and alleged infractions against believers the world over–and are pushing every manner of protectionism. Meanwhile, their own government won't let them pray in their own local schools.

✦ **Did the *Triple R* have sweet things to say about Gary Bauer?** We won't take them back (he *was* more libertarian on Social Security than the Cato Institute), but he landed on the wrong side of the China debate. Indeed, he was the leader of the wrong side, carrying water for trade warriors and social democrats who think China would make a great opponent in a new Cold War (so nostalgic are they for the last one). He heads an organization that is supposed to be protecting the American family against its own government. Instead, this time he's arguing for a bigger government to run a globalist mercantile policy of belligerence and war.

✦ **Christoph Blocher is Switzerland's most articulate and principled politician-entrepreneur.** As a libertarian purist and an aristocrat, he opposes entry into the European Community or the UN, defends the neutrality tradition, promotes free trade, and favors low taxes and bank secrecy. He is also leading the fight to block the Swiss central bank from handing over $5 billion in gold to Edgar Bronfman and the World Jewish Congress. "First of all," Blocher told *Businessweek* (July 8, 1997), "Switzerland did not take part in World War II. Our army and neutral policy kept the Germans from invading." He says Switzerland is being blackmailed, and "accepting that is unworthy of a free state." The reporter suggested he might be an anti-Semite, but Blocher defended himself quite ably. "I'm against blackmail, be it from a Jew, a Muslim, a Christian, or a nihilist. No one has the right to blackmail a country.... I reject the demands of the World Jewish Congress not because they are Jews, but in spite of the fact that they are Jewish."

✦ **Poor Manuel Noriega!** A federal appeals court has denied his request for a new trial. One of the grounds: the feds charged during his trial that he had millions in the bank because he was on the payroll of Columbian drug cartels. He was not allowed to introduce evidence that the CIA (under Director George Bush, among others) had paid him more than $10 million. Noriega, remember, was the CIA-installed president of Panama who became *persona non grata* with the Bush administration, probably because he stopped taking orders over matters related to the Iran-Contra coup. So Bush invaded Panama, killing as many as 7,000 innocent people in the process, kidnapped Noriega from the Vatican embassy where he had sought sanctuary, brought him to the U.S. and subjected him to a kangaroo court held in a bunker in Miami where–as CNN showed–U.S. prosecutors were eavesdropping on his confidential conversations with his lawyers. Remember the anti-Noriega hysteria generated by the U.S. media? He was even criticized by the media–amazingly in this p.c. era–for his bad skin as "pineapple face."

✦ **Is gold dead?** It recently fell to 12 year-lows. The reasons given include the Australian central bank liquidating some of its reserves. Meanwhile, the media assure us there's no inflation. So why should anyone buy or hold gold? We asked the expert, our publisher Burt Blumert, head of Ron Paul Coins. "This drop was devastating to the current generation of gold bugs, but to those more seasoned (a nice way of saying old), this dismal market is reminiscent of other times when gold was 'dead.' I remember the early 1970s, when I called Murray Rothbard. I was very troubled by the IMF's Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), and was worried that they could replace gold. Murray chuckled and reminded me of the history of gold, and how the inflationists are constantly waging a war on gold.

"Richard Russell said, 'when you own gold, you don't need confidence, you need time.' Of course, those of us who are older might not have the time! But the end of fiat currencies is as inevitable as rain, death, and taxes. And if anyone doubts it, the next time you're in San Francisco, come and visit, and I'll show you boxes of worthless paper money from all over the world.

"Remember that gold is an 'investment' the government doesn't like. If you own a share of IBM, you're a patriot. If you own an ounce of gold, you're an extremist. Government has many weapons in its war on gold. It can sell into the market as the IMF and the Treasury did for many years. It can threaten confiscation, and sometimes do it. So why hold this 'barbaric' relic of another time?

"Because the evil men who are constantly seeking power, the politicians, hate honest money. Gold is the only enduring money in recorded history. There are no guarantees as to timing. But ultimately, Richard Russell is right. It will endure. And alone among your savings, it holds the potential for privacy. So, they say that you're supposed to buy when the blood is in the streets. Of course, you hope it's not your own. P.S. My customers from India celebrate lower markets, so they can buy more. P.P.S. Who bought when the Bank of Australia sold? The *Financial Times* reports that it was other central banks. What do they know?"

✦ **Is William Hague, new leader of Britain's Tories, a homosexual?** That's the rumor in England about the unmarried young man, but it was just a rumor until gay-Brit Andrew

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Sullivan virtually outed him in the *New Republic* (July 14, 1997). Sullivan reminisces about their very close college years together, when Sullivan spent many tipsy weekends in Hague's apartment. The other great thing about Hague, says Sullivan, is that he's for lowering the age of consent for gay sex, supports "homosexual equality," and has "endorsed same-sex marriage."

✦ **These days, there's always something evil in a Disney movie.** "Hercules" is the latest cartoon feature, and while it doesn't have the anti-religious drive of the "Hunchback of Notre Dame," that's the problem. Paganism is shown as a great religion, presided over by wise old Zeus, holding the chaos and old night of the Titans at bay. Hercules's girlfriend is far too sexy for an alleged "G" movie, and none of the characters is really likeable, especially the ones intended to sell merchandise. Particularly bothersome are the Motown singers presented to us as Muses, who never seem to shut up. N.B.: the scenes of dead souls are too scary for young children.

✦ **Crash on Wall Street?** William Rees-Mogg of the London *Times* (June 26, 1997) notes that just before the crash of 1929, the dividend yield on the very high NYSE stocks was 3 percent. Today the S&P 500 dividend yield is 1.7 percent. In other words, it would take a 40 percent fall in the Dow to reach the level just before the 1929 crash. That's means a fall to 4,400, and to about 1,450 to match the market low in 1933. No bear market, notes Rees-Mogg, has ever come to an end without at least a 6% yield being reached. That means a Dow of 2,250. Bonds yield much more than stocks, but growth in the market far outweighs this. The process is reversed in a falling market, of course. The late Murray Rothbard used this sort of fundamental analysis in predicting the 1987 crash. Such crashes are supposed to be impossible with modern central banking (ha!), but the Japanese market fell 70 percent from its 1989 high, about the same as 1929.

✦ **"Men in Black," the sci-fi flick, is full of funny monsters.** But since this is Hollywood, we can expect really unbelievable things (such as a secret and selfless government agency engaged in saving the world from aliens–but entirely uninterested in tax money–whose agents wear black suits). We can also expect dirt. The pretty white medical examiner (Linda Fiorentino) keeps coming on to the black in black, Will Smith. He has to fight her off, but–you'll be relieved to know–she gets her man in the end.

✦ **Why doesn't anyone seem to be upset about Pol Pot's genocide?** Since he's a communist, his mass killings and socialist starvation are politically correct, of course. But there is also the U.S. government's role in preparing the way for him, and then promoting and supporting him. In 1970, Nixon, Kissinger, and the military-industrial-CIA complex overthrew Cambodia's neutral Prince Shianouk for his refusal to support U.S. aggression in Vietnam, Robert Scheer reminds us (*Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 1997). In 1973, Nixon, Kissinger, and company also bombed 600,000 Cambodians to death. This created the conditions for the monster Pol Pot to come to power, and kill two million people. Then all through the Reagan administration, the U.S. actively supported Pol Pot in the UN and other forums because he was anti-Vietnamese. It wasn't enough that the U.S. had invaded Vietnam, a country that never did anything to us, killed two million Vietnamese, mined and defoliated the country, and ran a trade embargo against the survivors. The Vietnamese still had to be hurt in anyway possible. Note: the U.S. murdered 2.6 million people in these two countries, not counting Pol Pot's activities. This is the same government that threatens fundamental liberties because 168 of its employees are bombed. They never should have been killed, but neither should the 2.6 million Vietnamese and Cambodians.

✦ **President Clinton** has called for an "honest dialog on race." That is, blacks tell whites how awful whites are, and whites tell blacks how awful whites are. Then whites apologize for slavery, segregation, science, literature, etc.

✦ **Moments before the estranged wife of Michael Kennedy** was to meet with prosecutors investigating whether he slept with the 14-year-old babysitter, Kennedy gave his wife a $560,000 cottage on Nantucket for $1. His wife then told the prosecutors no, he hadn't done it. (*Las Vegas Sun*, June 18, 1997)

✦ **Dissing the white man** turns out to be the central principle at the University of Illinois Law School. Or as Dean John Columbo instructs his faculty with a "Diversity Checklist," never use any examples from real life, such as a white CEO or a black mugger. Instead, make sure that your teaching is suffused with a "positive light" for such "traditionally disfavored groups" as blacks, women, gays, and Hispanics, and an "inferior light" for such "traditionally favored groups" as whites, men, Christians, and straights. (*Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 1997)

✦ **Is nothing beyond Hollywood or its acolytes?** Roger Ebert gives a rave review to "Kissed," an unrated movie that celebrates necrophilia. But don't worry: "It could be about spirituality or transcendence" says Ebert. The young woman's sex acts with the dead are "something like a sacrament," and "we feel some sympathy, some understanding" (*Chicago Sun-Times*, April 25, 1997)

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✦ **"When the stock market crashes, it will be like an earthquake leveling a city**; so says Thomas H. Eichler, president and chief investment officer of Eichler Magnin, Inc., a Los Angeles-based investment management firm; he says that within the next 12 months the stock market will plunge by 50 percent." (*Drudge Report*, June 16, 1997)

✦ **Communist China?** The Chinese government's tax take is about a quarter of the U.S.'s (10% vs. 40% of national product). That's our kind of communists. Then we heard them say, according to NPR, that they could not establish democracy in Hong Kong, because democracy leads to the welfare state, and they are committed to keeping Hong Kong capitalist.

✦ **Are we in a New Era, where business cycles have been banished and stocks can only go up?** Investors and the media seem to think so, which is ominous, points out Tracy G. Herrick (*The Money Analyst*, July 1997). There have been two other New Eras: the 1920s and the period from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. Both New Eras were "heady experiences at the time, but proved to be short-lived." Stock prices then fell 60 to 70 percent, adjusted for living costs. "These declines were much sharper and lasted longer than typical declines of 25 to 30 percent which have been associated with business cycles.

"One measure that defines these new eras is total stock market capitalization as a percent of gross domestic product. An elevated valuation of this measure indicates that stocks are held in high esteem compared with the output of their underlying assets. For example, in August 1929, this indicator reached a high of 81.4 percent, pointing to stock market capitalization that almost equaled the value of the total output of the nation. It subsequently fell to 16 percent in April 1942, just after the U.S. entered the Second World War. The second new era occurred between 1969 and December 1972, when the indicator rose to 78.1 percent." Ten years later, it was 33.5 percent.

"The current new era showed a banner reading of 107 percent at the beginning of the year, and it has risen since. That means that the capitalization of the stock market exceeds the value of output from all of the country's factories, mines, utilities, and services.

"These periods had three characteristics. First, skeptics of the new eras eventually threw in the towel, and even they began to promote the view that a new era had arrived. The recent forecast by Robert Prechter that the Dow could soon surpass 10,000 is a modern equivalent. Second, quality spreads compressed to minimal levels." Investors "reached for highest yields and profits, as if there were only one playing field. Third, the volume of investments among many second and third world countries rose sharply. In the late 1920s, the second and third world" included eastern Europe as well as other countries, such as Brazil. In the late 1960s, it included Hong Kong, Singapore, and again Brazil. Currently, China has taken center stage, as well as, once again, Brazil.

"New eras have ended when unexpected currency problems force economic hardships and stock prices fall. The power of currencies to affect stock prices is not widely appreciated, since they appear to be a world unto themselves. In fact, currencies underpin the structures of other markets and comprise the largest financial market of all."

✦ **What kind of regime do liberals want**, in their heart of hearts? They want a regime that socializes the economy while allowing a free press, subsidizes cultural permissiveness, and mandates labor unions and universal democracy. China is quickly becoming the opposite: an authoritarian country with traditional ways, no voting rights, no unions, and a freer and freer economy that is creating one of the great economic miracles of the century. Wise up, liberals: economic freedom is far more important to people's lives than supposed political or cultural freedoms. You can't eat the "right to vote" or feed it to your starving children. As for the supposed freedom to form unions, that's merely license to violate property rights. As for a free press, when was the last time it helped bolster the cause of real freedom in this country? The early 19th century?

✦ **When gays shoot gays**, as in the Versace case, it's the fault of heterosexuals. Commenting on the murder of the degenerate fashion designer by a homosexual prostitute, Darryl Cooper, chairman of Gay Men and Lesbians Opposing Violence, told the *Washington Post* (July 17, 1997), "The underlying factor in all of this is that from birth, society programs every one of us to hate gay people. Children grow up with this message: 'Gay people are below you, gay people are worth nothing.' We're giving them this message that gay lives are worth nothing." Of course, this is no different from blaming whites for the dreaded "black-on-black crime" (black-on-white crime being just what the honkies have coming).

✦ **"The Jury has spoken**. I am not writing this to defend Tim McVeigh," writes retired Air Force Colonel Bill Duckwitz, "but to point out the travesty of justice that has been done this day. The people of Oklahoma City and the nation wanted a conviction of somebody, anybody, and that is what they got. One only has to look at the pictures of the front of the Murrah building in Oklahoma City and then look at the barracks building in Saudi Arabia to see that Tim McVeigh was made the sacrificial lamb for this act of terrorism.

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"The truck bomb that caused the deaths of 12 American GI's and dependents in Saudi Arabia was six (6) times the size of the bomb that supposedly destroyed the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City. Take a look at the barracks building. There is no major structural damage. Look at the Murrah building. Although I have been schooled in explosives, it doesn't take any knowledge of explosives to see that the truck bomb that was attributed to the work of Tim McVeigh could not have caused the structural collapse of the Murrah building. Why did the barracks building not collapse and the Murrah building fall down like it were made of legos? Because there was no high explosives placed on the structural members of the building in Saudi Arabia as there were in Oklahoma City.

"There have been many in the area of the Murrah building and even some of the survivors that have said there were more than one explosion. Oklahoma State Representative Charles Key has been blocked at every turn by the governor, the State Attorney General, the District Attorney and the media in his attempt to call a county grand jury to really look into the bombing of the Murrah building. What about the discovery of additional explosive devices that sent rescuers and spectators scurrying from the building as bomb squad members were brought in to disarm the bombs? Why has the expert testimony of General Benton Partin (Ret.) and physicist Sam Cohen, who insist that internal demolition charges where used in the Murrah building, been ignored?

"This has to be the greatest cover up and travesty of justice in this country in a long time, perhaps in this century. Yes, the jury has spoken and Tim McVeigh will probably die from a lethal injection to appease the media and the families of the Oklahoma City bombing but will justice have been done? I think not." (Special thanks to Dick Bachert.) RRR

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Knight was never alleged to have owned or handled explosives, nor any illegal or untaxed firearm. He is not alleged to have ever harmed anyone, nor stolen anything, nor threatened anyone with harm. Of course, the government obviously feels very threatened by the existence of groups like the Viper Team (not militia), compared to the estimated annual death toll of America's inner-city street gangs, now passing 1,200 corpses per year.

On June 24, the jury reported they were hopelessly deadlocked. But Judge Carroll was not satisfied. He sent the 12 back to the jury room, instructing them that they must reach a unanimous verdict. Ninety minutes later they returned, and found Chuck Knight guilty. Due for sentencing Sept. 8, Chuck Knight faces five years in a federal pen.

The "unregistered machine guns" presented by the prosecution had actually been built by the government.

I called Knight, father of four children aged 16 to 26 (and stepfather of two more boys), in Phoenix July 8, and asked him why he thought the jury finally voted to convict.

"The jury was convinced by the tantrums thrown by the prosecutors that this was a dangerous group. There was hardly any mention made of Chuck Knight. Mostly that these guys had machine guns, and that Gary Bauer had, unbeknownst to most of the rest of us, built seven hand grenades."

Defense attorney Ivan Abrams objected to the government's hauling machine guns belonging to other Vipers into the courtroom, since Knight was not charged with owning any such weapons. Objection overruled.

I told Knight I'd heard some of the "unregistered machine guns" presented by the prosecution had actually been built by the government out of spare parts found at the homes of the various militia members.

"This is the way the law reads: If they can take parts and with eight hours of professional work by professional gunsmiths working full time in Washington, D.C., make it fire more than one round, then it was a machine gun. There was a guy who published a magazine piece on this a couple of years ago, a guy who took a wrecked Volvo and in about seven hours made a weapon that would fire four or five rounds. So by the legal definition used in this case the Volvo was, technically, a machine gun. We're talking about professional gunsmiths, with access to sophisticated machine shops."

Surely the best defense, then, would be to challenge the law as ridiculous, to ask the jury to acquit based on the statute or ATF regulation being unconstitutionally broad?

"The attorney is not allowed to challenge the law, he's there to prove I didn't violate the law. Judge Earl H. Carroll said 'There won't be any constitutional issues discussed in this court'."

Why does Knight think most of his fellow militiamen took the plea bargain?

"You don't have a clue to the terrorist tactics that were employed.... Hank [decorated veteran Henry Oberturf] was beat up while in jail, and Rick Walker nearly died because they would not give him his medicine, he's a diabetic with a heart problem...."

Still, the average citizen assumes the jury gets to weigh all the issues, that the defense is free to present its explanation of how the Second Amendment renders the law in question null and void...

"No, you absolutely can't present

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any defense you want," Knight protests. "There are so many things you're not allowed to say."

Knight, himself, would have faced a lesser sentence had he taken the plea bargain.

"I don't want to end up standing in front of God someday and saying, 'I didn't believe, so I took a plea bargain and lied about my whole life to get out of trouble...." Meanwhile, the feds have "all but put me out of business.... I have clients that are afraid to have me there because they're afraid they'll be put under surveillance. The guy who's most terrified is an orthodontist who's had some run-ins with the IRS. He said, 'Chuck, I know they're out to get anything they can on you, so I just can't have you around, I just can't stand to go through all that again....' That's the saddest thing I've ever heard, that's how close we are to Hitler's Germany...."

I asked Knight what he believes the government's real goal is, with such prosecutions. "Their goal is to disarm the public. This is to make sure everyone knows that if they can put me in prison for five years for going out to two field exercises in six months, after 15 years in business in this town, meeting the public all day every day, a church-going guy, a good father...if we can throw this guy in prison, think what we can do to you.

"If we tell you you can't have any guns, you better get all the guns out of your house right now, law or no law. If they can terrorize my wife into taking a year—she pled guilty to the same charge I'm up on, she took a plea bargain and got a year and a day—I've got to be made an example of. You just don't fight it when the government comes after you; that's not allowed."

What was his wife's offense? "They had nothing on her except that she knew these people and she knew they were making explosives to go blow up out in the desert, and she spoke Politically Incorrectly and talked about what we should do if, if, if.... There was never any plan. Under the law, you have to have a plan for an explosive to become a destructive device...."

"My argument centered around the fact that there was no plan to harm anyone," explains defense attorney Abrams. "Who was the target of these weapons of destruction? Where were they going to be used and when and how? Were they going to be thrown?... And every one of these questions resulted in the answer, 'I don't know.' So there was no plan and no intent. And if intent is required for a criminal conspiracy, there's no crime. Is it a crime to bury ammonium nitrate, to have these devices ready to go in case of emergency? No."

According to Hamilton and Madison, the people must be armed to oppose any encroachment by government.

"The Pentagon has contingency plans, but *we're* not allowed to have contingency plans," reports Phoenix writer Fran Van Cleave, a friend of Knight's co-defendant Dean Pleasant. "You wouldn't believe the sneering and sarcastic tone of the prosecutors," says Van Cleave, who sat through the trial. "According to the prosecution, we can't credit any discussions of how we might someday have a government more tyrannical than what we have now."

In *The Federalist No. 29*, of course, Alexander Hamilton argued that the "people at large" must be "properly armed and equipped" so that "If circumstances should at any time oblige the government to form an army of any magnitude, that army can never be formidable to the liberties of the people while there is a large body of citizens, little if at all inferior to them in discipline and the use of arms, who stand ready to defend their rights and those of their fellow citizens."

In *The Federalist No. 46*, James Madison argued "The ultimate authority...resides in the people alone," and assured those who opposed his proposed new, stronger central government that they need never fear any spread of federal tyranny, since any encroachments by the federal government would "provoke plans of resistance," and "an appeal to a trial of force."

One has to wonder whether the Constitution would ever have been ratified, had Mr. Madison immediately added, "Of course, if any citizens who possess arms actually get together to *discuss* making plans of resistance, they'll be promptly rounded up and imprisoned for five years."

During the Phoenix trial, some material from the Fully-Informed Jury Association was placed on cars in the court parking lot. It instructed jurors of their long-established historical right to ignore the judge's instructions

Dean of the Austrian School of economics, American historian, founder of modern libertarianism, and restorer of the Old Right, Murray N. Rothbard (1926–1995) was a one-man army of liberty. The *Triple R* is inspired by his spirit, and dedicated to his vision.

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and acquit if they felt the law was an affront to the Constitution or their conscience. "The judge instructed people not to read it, to throw it away or bring it to him unread," Knight says.

"They said after the fact that they didn't feel I was guilty," Knight reports, "that the law was too broad. [Juror] Chuck Wahn said that in a broadcast interview. He was almost in tears. But it doesn't help me any.... It would have been nice if I had a juror or two with some guts. The jurors in the William Penn case (London, 1670) were tortured by the judge, and they still refused to convict."

"The jurors are quoted in the newspaper down here as saying we thought Chuck Knight was a nice guy, but there just wasn't any choice, the judge said you have to ignore your hearts and enforce the law," explained defense attorney Abrams in a telephone interview two days after the verdict.

"Aren't they just speeding up Darwinism?" I asked attorney Abrams of the government's prosecutions of these highly-visible militia units. By shutting down the goofier guys who parade around in public in camouflage fatigues, aren't they just teaching those who profoundly fear and distrust the government how to be more secretive, more professional...and simultaneously walling them off from the influence of more moderate voices?

"But that's what they want to do," the self-described liberal Democrat replied. "It is to the government's advantage to make more and badder militias, because the worse they are, the more agencies like the ATF can come out and say, 'We are the first line of defense, we are saving the nation from ruin, we need money from Congress.'

"We're in a terrible state as a nation in that we have no enemies. So what better enemy to create than ugly guys in ugly clothes, redneck racists running around killing people with stinking bags of fertilizer?...

"You put these guys from New York out here where the real disaffection is, and they'll be shocked first of all at the depth of it. I'm shocked at the depth of the disaffection, but also at the way it permeates all layers of society....

"I really do think the government wants to encourage the militias, which is why you get agents provocateurs like (John 'Doc') Schultz," alias Private Investigator Scott Jason Wells. He is a former Colorado State Trooper who infiltrated the Vipers on his own initiative after taking a job at the Phoenix gun store they frequented. He then shopped his "undercover" services for months to numerous agencies before attracting the attention of the Arizona Department of Game & Fish, and then the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. He eventually received $12,000 for his "services."

When Schultz had proposed to the rest of the group that they rob banks, and Chuck Knight replied "That's the last thing we'd ever do." Schultz's testimony for the government "was that they were just prioritizing." Abrams laughs. "I thought when he said that we were home free, if anything would show the absurdity of the case that would be it. I asked, 'What was the second-to-last thing they were going to do?' but the question was thrown out."

By focusing the nation's fears on these new bogey-men, "It certainly takes attention away from Bill Clinton and his sexual proclivities, so Chuck Knight's a very important matter," attorney Abrams explains. "One little air conditioner repairman in Phoenix Arizona rises to a very important position."

I asked former federal prosecutor Abrams if he was ready to join a militia, himself. "I'm going to keep practicing with my Winchester Model '94 in 30-30, and my Glock 23, and keep buying as much ammunition as I can possibly afford.... I think we have to stand up and thumb our noses at the tyrannies of government, and not be like this jury and say 'We didn't want to convict him, but we had to; we didn't have any choice.' I'm just really appalled at the ability of the American people to just turn over authority to the central government...." RRR

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BILL TALKS ABOUT RACE

Michael Levin

Harder than writing about political statements on race is reading them in the first place. With very few exceptions they are hackneyed, unctuous bilge. Worse: by recycling and thereby reinforcing old errors and deceptions, they postpone engagement with real difficulties that much longer.

One does not expect much from President Bill, but his widely-heralded "major address on race" to the graduating class of the U. of California, San Diego, was abysmal even by his standards. Basically a rehash of leftist canards and nostrums, it managed to be entirely predictable and profoundly disappointing, even disturbing, at the same time.

To begin with, Clinton's rhetoric was markedly anti-white. Naturally, he refused to give whites any credit for the countless laws, judicial decisions, and private initiatives of the past fifty years meant to help blacks at white expense: school integration, the overthrow of freedom of association in the

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name of civil rights, racial quotas, government set-asides, antimajoritarian "voting rights," thousands of scholarships and training programs—this catalogue was somehow overlooked. Equally naturally, Clinton lauded black "heroes of the civil rights movement" as if they had vanquished whole armies of hostile whites solely by their own efforts. In truth, of course, the "civil rights revolution" was done for blacks by a sympathetic white elite, most especially a white federal government. Blacks would have gotten precisely nowhere had whites genuinely wanted to "oppress" them.

And, of course, American history à la Clinton became a tale of white hypocrisy and malfeasance: We were born with the Declaration of Independence, which asserted that we were all created equal, and a Constitution that enshrined slavery. We fought a bloody civil war to abolish slavery and preserve the union [and just who did the fighting and bleeding?], but we remained a house divided and unequal by law for another century. We advanced across the continent in the name of freedom, yet in so doing we pushed Native Americans off their land, often crushing their culture and their livelihood. Our Statue of Liberty welcomes poor, tired, huddled masses of immigrants to our borders, but each new wave has felt the sting of discrimination.

Sadly, "evidence of bigotry" continues to this day, seemingly all due to whites, from "desecration of houses of worship" to "demeaning talk in corporate suites."

This sort of rewriting of the past is so standard it scarcely counts; Clinton's anti-white animus, as I say, went deeper. Consider how he formulated the cliché that every barrel contains a few bad apples. Concerning blacks he said primly: "If a black American commits a crime, condemn the act. But remember that most African-Americans are hard-working, law-abiding citizens." As for Hispanics, "the vast majority are responsible citizens" even if "a Latino gang member deals drugs." Contrast this with his more emotionally charged admonition about whites: "If white teenagers beat a young African-American almost to death just because of his race, for God's sake, condemn the act. But remember, the overwhelming majority of white people will find it just as hateful."

Wanting a nonjudgmental atmosphere in which whites can admit their sickness is all part of Clinton's unrelieved negativism toward whites.

Let's deconstruct. The black "crime" is wholly unspecified, as is the race of its victim (and drug-dealing has no victim); the white crime is described in detail and tendentiously made anti-black. The average black or Hispanic is hard-working, law-abiding and responsible, whereas Clinton found it inexpedient, or could not bring himself, to characterize whites in any positive way; the best he could manage about them is that they are properly appalled by the misbehavior of other whites!

Incidentally, Clinton was being disingenuous at best about black law-abidingness; right now about 1/3 of all black males run afoul of the criminal justice system at some time in their lives, and in large cities with large black populations more than half of all black males will at some point be arrested for committing a violent crime.

Many people see a concession to whites in Clinton's remark that the conversation he proposes "seems to threaten them" and "must not exclude them." Toward the end of his speech he championed "honest dialogue" and urged everyone "to get past defensiveness and fear and political correctness and other barriers to honesty."

Granted that acknowledgment of the reality of pressures to be politically correct is a remarkable admission from anyone on the left, I still detect no concessiveness here. Clinton, as I read him, is worried that fear of being censured for their malodorous beliefs will keep whites from expressing them openly, and if they don't say what they really think they will never be able to face how vile it is. Just as the first, necessary, step in curing a drunk or drug addict is that he admit his problem, the first step in curing whites of racism is getting them to 'fess up. Wanting a nonjudgmental atmosphere in which whites can admit their sickness is all part of Clinton's unrelieved negativism toward whites.

I'm not joking about the analogy with drunkenness; Clinton did sometimes lapse into therapeutic psychobabble, as when he reported appointing a panel "to help educate Americans about the facts surrounding issues of race, to promote a dialogue in every community in the land to confront and work through these issues." Now, one would think that dialoguing and working through are far less important than the facts about race themselves, on which the possibility and desirability of racial reconciliation hinge. Here Clinton was especially skimpy. The sorry history of white wrongdoing is presumably one such fact, but that aside Clinton mentioned just one other: "There are no children," he said, "who, because of their ethnic or racial background, who [sic] cannot meet the highest academic standards."

This is not a lie, exactly, since lying implies knowledge of the truth plus a desire to deceive, and I doubt that Clinton cares what the truth is or whether anyone actually believes him. But it is a falsehood, of the greatest

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consequence. For if black and Hispanic children are just as educable as white–although, Clinton added in a puzzling caveat, they do need "well-trained teachers," "well-equipped classrooms," and "reasoned reforms," stage-setting somehow unnecessary for whites or Asians–why their subpar academic performance? Why are blacks so poor, and why, as Clinton noted obliquely, is the "spark of enterprise" so lacking in the "inner cities"? Obviously because whites have denied them the opportunity to show what they can do. And insuring that they have this opportunity is the point of "affirmative action," that one topic that lifted Clinton from a fog of vagueness into clear mendacity.

Clinton introduced this topic by pointedly admitting that affirmative action "has not been perfect," quickly followed by the assurance that, "when used in the right way, it has worked." In one sense, of course, this is true. If by "working" one means the replacement of whites by blacks, then indeed affirmative action cannot help but be successful; reserve 15% of the positions in a law school class of 500 for blacks, and presto your entering class will include 75 blacks. It doesn't matter that 75 whites with superior academic records have been turned away; the practice has "worked." And Clinton boldly accepted this definition, noting that there are more African-American...lawyers and judges, scientists and engineers than ever before." True enough; how could it be otherwise?

Clinton used this "success" as an occasion to warn against "resegregating" higher education, and challenge critics of affirmative action to "come up with an alternative" to prevent this from happening.

This bit of verbal chicanery is known in logic as the fallacy of the complex question. Clinton has assumed that there is something wrong with reducing the proportion of blacks and Hispanics in higher education to the levels of pre-affirmative action days, so the proper response is not to come up with new ways to shoehorn in unqualified minorities, but to dispute this assumption itself. A recent study in the *National Law Journal* showed that, were blacks asked to meet the standards expected of whites, only about one-tenth of the blacks currently in law school would be there. What this indicates to an objective observer, quite simply, is that most blacks now in law school should not be there, and that resegregation on the basis of merit would be welcome.

Were blacks asked to meet the standards expected of whites, only about one-tenth of the blacks currently in law school would be there.

Clinton tried the usual bluff to blunt this inference: "I believe a student body that reflects...diversity...has independent educational value." The *bien-pensants* repeat this like a mantra nowadays, but it is simply not true. When I was a graduate student in philosophy before quotas came along, the full range of opinion in my discipline could be found among us white males. We had intellectual diversity, which is all that matters. So far as I can see, the recruitment of underqualified blacks and Hispanics has added only truculence to the academic world, not new ideas.

As Charles Krauthammer has also observed, the most obnoxious passages in Clinton's speech dealt with the motives of his opponents. To begin with, he felt it necessary to issue an assurance: "Let me say, I know that the people of California voted to repeal affirmative action without any ill motive." This too sounds concessive, until you realize that the whole point of saying what should go without saying is to call it into question. Suppose Clinton had said "I know that everyone in my audience is sober," or "I am quite sure that every black on the platform with me today is legitimate." By expressing confidence in the good intentions of Californians Clinton suggested that confidence needed to be expressed, that opposition to affirmative action creates some presumption of bad faith, that he is giving Californians the benefit of a doubt he has created.

And what, according to Clinton, was the motive of Californians? It was "a conviction that discrimination and isolation are no longer barriers to achievement." No, it was the conviction that quotas are unfair, that they make today's whites pay for past misdeeds that they are not responsible for and may never have happened, that the longer quotas exist the more blacks will regard special privilege as a birthright, further rending the social fabric. Opponents of quotas are not naifs, however convenient it is to portray them so.

In oversimplifying his critics' motives, Clinton committed another textbook fallacy, the "straw man": create the impression you have refuted a position by attacking a caricature of it. This was not the only time he did so. He had the nerve to say "There are those who argue that scores on standardized tests should be the sole measure of qualification for admissions to colleges and universities." In fact, nobody says this.

As everyone knows, the primary criterion for admission is and should be high school grades. Standardized test scores are useful secondary indicators of ability, and are particularly useful in controlling for variations in grading standards among different schools. The only trouble with them, for liberals, is that blacks do worse on them than do whites (and, inexplicably, Asians), and that this discrepancy

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just underlines the grade inflation in majority-minority schools, where sheer attendance in a math or English class often suffices for a B or an A. Liberals like Clinton who want to do away with standardized tests help the argument along by the fib that these tests are dangerously influential.

(Another fib, although apparently too brazen for Bill to trot out: that objective tests predict nothing. The latest supposed evidence for this is the failure of the SAT scores of incoming Harvard students to correlate with their subsequent grades. The fallacy here is that all Harvard students have extremely high SATs, so the tiny variations among them mean nothing. It is as if liberals argued that height has nothing to do with success in basketball success because 6'11" NBA centers score as often as centers who are 7'1". So they do, but this does not mean a man 5'5" has a good chance of outshooting Patrick Ewing.)

The true tale of Clinton's initiative is told by the composition of his "Advisory Board." Only three of its nine members are white, and they are certified liberals; an ex-governor of New Jersey who was a U.S. delegate to the Women's Rights Conference in Beijing, an ex-governor of Mississippi said by an official White House handout to have "fought for equal opportunity for all citizens and better relations between the races," and a director of a foundation that issues "grants to support community agencies in South Central Los Angeles." The "persons of color" seem to be no better; one of them, Suzan [sic] Cook, recently reminisced in the *New York Times* about an occasion in 1965 when the mother of a white friend did not want her daughter to play with Miss Cook, and how this showed her the need to "break down barriers." The chairman of the committee is John Hope Franklin, who has made a long career of chronicling slavery. In other words, the mixture very much as before.

The most depressing aspect of Clinton's rewarming of liberal pap is the opportunity he blew. The Cold War is over. Communism no longer inspires anyone but the professoriate in American and English universities. By far the most consequential issue facing America in 1997 is race. But new, or at least seldom heard, ideas are needed; we will get precisely nowhere by continuing to attribute the friction between the races to "racism," to be resolved by "coming together" for "conversations" about the glories of an ill-defined "diversity." By using up the public's short attention span with just such tired bushwa, Clinton has delayed a proper reckoning by several more years, during which time things can only get worse. RRR

THATCHER AND TEUTONOPHOBIA

Paul Gottfried

Having just returned from a visit to England and from extended conversations with conservative journalists and political leaders there, allow me to offer some of my impressions. From my visit, and particularly, from one informative luncheon with the editors of the British *Spectator*, it became clear that views long held by American paleos in regard to British elites should be reexamined. Not that those views are entirely unfounded. Listening to Margaret Thatcher or reading the Heritage Foundation's resident Thatcherite Stuart Butler or British journalist-historian Paul Johnson, one notes certain unseemly obsessions, and these may explain why Murray Rothbard was always on

Whipping up dislike of Germans is old hat for British elites.

guard for hidden motives behind talk of a "special relationship" between the English-speaking democracies.

Most particularly one picks up from these sources a hatred of Germans, one that could be seen especially in Thatcher's press interviews and oratory from the late eighties on. Like Butler, Thatcher urged the U.S. government to put pressure on West Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Butler and Thatcher feared that a reunified Germany would pose a threat to England's interests on the continent. In Thatcher's case, however, the opposition was surprisingly shrill and characterized by references to a wicked German nation.

In 1992, Thatcher let it be known that a reunified Germany was "one of the great failures of my life." She thereafter opposed England's joining of the European Union on the same grounds: that it was a preliminary step in a German plan to conquer Europe and thereby to complete the work of Bismarck and the Kaiser as well as of Hitler. And Thatcher, like her friends at the *Wall Street Journal* and Heritage, spoke out for the continuation of an American-led Nato. This too was held to be necessary because of the continuation of the German authoritarian personality and German economic hegemony, a combo Thatcher claimed was making her own country frantic.

Broad hints were also given that the Russians and other Eastern Europeans could not really be trusted to become "democratic." Like the Germans, they had authoritarian and anti-Semitic histories, and therefore the U.S. should play supercop across the Atlantic, by sitting on the Krauts and hemming in the Ruskies. Among British publications the *Economist*

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and *Daily Telegraph* presented such arguments, which were echoed in neocon-liberal publications on this side of the Atlantic, including *Policy Review*, *Foreign Affairs*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*.

Meanwhile appreciative references began to turn up about the long-discredited tomes of Fritz Fischer. These soporific works, it was claimed, show the continuity in war aims between the Kaiser's and Hitler's Germany. Though Fischer never demonstrated what he insisted were imperial Germany's territorial ambitions in "unleashing" the First World War, British Tories, led by Paul Johnson, paid tribute to this quirky German leftist specializing in turgid prose. His words became grist for Teutonophobic mills, especially on the eve of German reunification.

Of course, whipping up dislike of Germans is old hat for British elites, an activity going back well before 1914. Moreover, recent tirades against the Russians as an "anti-democratic" people can be understood in terms of the British desire to keep the U.S. in Europe, as a defender of British interests.

Yet I was struck by the recentness of this invective. For example, hatred of Germans was not a characteristic British Tory attitude in the 1950s. Tory leaders who had spent much of their lives opposing the Germans, like Churchill and Eden, did not continue denouncing Germans after the Second World War. Churchill in fact began to speak of the First War as a tragic mistake and became a close friend of the West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. By the 1950s, moreover, a scholarly consensus formed, in England as much as on the continent, that responsibility for the First War was shared by both belligerent sides.

The idea, which the Thatcherites have taken from the German Left of an exclusive German responsibility for the disaster of 1914, had been widely rejected by the 1950s, as wartime propaganda. The question is whether new evidence has been brought to light which changes the historical picture decisively. It is doubtful, however, that the Fischer-thesis has cast much light on the First War. Or that this thesis explains why Paul Johnson in *Modern Times* assumes overriding German responsibility for every conflict involving Germans from Bismarck on.

The point being made is that there is no scholarly breakthrough which accounts for this recent Teutonophobia–any more than new revelations about the Holocaust can adequately explain intensified dislike for Germans or Eastern Europeans among American journalists. In the British case, however, these prejudices may be less widespread than Americans might think from looking at certain commentators. During my visit to London, I had occasion to speak to some of the leading critics of British entry into the European Union, including a former minister, Lord Norman Tebbit, and economists Brian Burkitt and Mark Bainbridge. None of these Euroskeptics nor any of the relevant literature mentioned a German danger as a compelling reason for opposing the Union. The reasons that invariably came up were the loss of national sovereignty, a feared rise in British unemployment, and a disadvantageous distribution of benefits, which would help, or so it is believed, poorer members at the expense of wealthier ones.

Thatcher rages against the Germans at the drop of a pin and wants American support to "face down an anti-Semitic but nonaggressive Russia."

The discussions of Nato which I encountered in the British press contained no warnings about a German danger nor about the undemocratic character of Russians. Nato skeptics seem at least as much in evidence in England as do Euroskeptics, and there is less journalistic enthusiasm there than here for any continuation, let alone extension, of the Nato project.

Both Lew Rockwell and I noticed that the London *Times* now treats Nato as a commitment whose time has gone. Neither revulsion for Germans nor distrust of anti-democratic Russians can be used effectively in England to justify a cumbrous and costly defense structure, with a large American presence. Britain's most pressing foreign problems are now internal, such as invasions from Asia, the West Indies, and what was once French North Africa. Third World immigration, together with secessionist movements on the Celtic fringes, are much more worrisome to Englishmen of all classes than Thatcherite obsessions with German or Russian menaces.

This of course is not true for the neocon beachhead in England. And as one senior writer from the British *Spectator* stressed, the purpose of this beachhead is relentlessly clear. Neoconservative funds and honors have been poured on prominent British academics, most noticeably Norman Stone and the late Shirley Letwin. For several years, as the result of what turned out to be a reversible coup, the London *Sunday Times* book review section featured American neoconservatives and their all too predictable commentary.

Even more significantly, the book reviews and opinion pieces of Paul Johnson, who may be the most prolific right-of-center British political commentator, follow neoconservative party lines unfailingly. They are philosemitic, vigilant against any hint of what neocons judge to be anti-Semitism, and unswervingly Teutonophobic. Despite

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his already notorious drinking habit and an accompanying tendency to be repetitious, Johnson continues to be published in newspapers and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic.

Like most neocons, the former prime minister rages against the Germans at the drop of a pin and wants American support, in the words of one British *Spectator*-luncheon companion of mine, to "face down an anti-Semitic but nonaggressive Russia."

One explanation given for this is Thatcher's explicit philosemitism, extending from her upbringing, in a nonconformist Protestant household with affinities to biblical Jewry, and to her representation in Parliament of a heavily Jewish district. Thatcher is fond of observing that ethical values come from the Jews, and her cabinet, while she was prime minister, included five Jewish members. Though she may have well absorbed the prejudices of Jewish advisors and constituents, or so I was told by some of her critics, more likely she got them from elsewhere. The Jews in her cabinet, save for Malcolm Rifkind, were not involved in foreign affairs, and those I have met or read about, like the passionately anti-socialist Keith Joseph, scion of a distinguished Anglo-Sephardic family, do not stay up nights worrying about German or Russian national character.

What may have pushed Thatcher in the unhappy direction she has gone is the flattering attention lavished on her by neocons—or so I was told by my hosts, who produce the *Salisbury Review*, Murray and Robin Cave. The pairing of Thatcher with Reagan in the eighties, as a global democratic free marketeer, and the celebration of her government by the *Wall Street Journal*, Heritage, *Commentary*, the *Washington Times*, the Murdoch press, and other neocon agitprop sources may have impressed unduly this greengrocer's daughter. Before her new contacts, it seems unlikely that she would have berated Anglican Bishops for not believing sufficiently in global democracy; or that she would have embarrassed her foreign service by venting hate on Germans.

According to Frank Johnson of the British *Spectator*, who had known her before, Thatcher only became vocal on certain dislikes after her ascent to power. This too may show the coming together of English and American societies in terms of our afflictions, which include crime, immigration, managerial-state oppression, and neocon-financed prejudice. RRR

Of Aliens and Conspiracies

Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

When the media want to smear conspiracy theories, they lump people who doubt the Vince Foster suicide with those who think little green men visited Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947.

But where's the similarity? It can make perfect sense for someone to knock off the president's lawyer. But the feds would hardly cover up a visit by bug-eyed monsters. An alien invasion would be a boon to big government.

Even so, 100,000 people, convinced of a cover-up, are trekking to Roswell to celebrate the golden anniversary of the landing. At the same time, the Air Force has released a new study called "The Roswell Report: Case Closed," saying that the aliens were actually crash dummies dropped in a military experiment.

In a rare instance, the government's version of events makes more sense than that of independent researchers. Can the government for once be telling the truth? Sure, and here's why.

Can the government for once be telling the truth? Sure, and here's why.

The key to a good conspiracy theory is that it: (a) fits with the known facts, and (b) is in accord with the nature of the beast in question. Since facts are often in dispute, and can be lied about by all parties, the second condition is the crucial one.

For example, Ralph Nader has spent three decades weaving conspiracy theories about corporate malice. As harebrained as his tales have been, they've caught on because they revolve around a coherent claim: corporations want profits. It's a small if unproven step to say they're willing to do anything to get them.

Most conspiracy theories make a coherent claim about the nature of government. They say that government wants to enhance its power. No disputing that. Government will lie, cheat, steal, and kill to bring that about. All of history testifies to the corruptions of power.

This is key to sorting out plausible from implausible theories. For example, if the Navy really did shoot down TWA 800 by mistake, would the top brass be likely to tell the truth or cover it up? The answer is obvious. The facts may be in dispute, but the motives of the actors cannot be.

Not so with the wacky idea that D.C. has covered up a tour stop by highly intelligent space creatures in the days after the Second World War.

First, if the aliens are so smart, why would they pop up in America in 1947? Didn't they know what the U.S. government did to, say, the Japanese? Why wouldn't they have picked a safe place to land, like Switzerland?

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Second, government would have every incentive to trumpet a visit from outer space. Imagine the money that could be shoveled out to favored interest groups. Every scientist in the country could be given a grant to study the beings.

It would be a huge boost to NASA. The political class would be agitating to spend the entire national product on space exploration. Forget Mars. We're talking about inter-galactic boondoggles to make the space shuttle look like the welfare state under Coolidge.

And hasn't Washington been fishing around for a foreign enemy recently? It's tried making devils out of a whole series of foreign countries, most recently China, but without much success. The military-industrial complex would seize the chance to fight off the "extraterrestrial threat."

From the government's point of view, the Cold War was good for a few trillion in tax dollars and military welfare. What would the Space War be worth?

There would be something in it for everyone. Secularists in the judicial branch would use proof of alien life to try to discredit the Western religious tradition. So we're not the center of the universe after all.

Immigration officials would have a field day. We'd better get used to swarms of Haitians on boats, they'd say, because they're nothing compared to the coming wave of spacebacks, all of whom will need medicaid, affirmative action, and bilingual education.

It would be big government's biggest day in the sun since Pearl Harbor. In fact, it's more plausible that the government is secretly behind the movement that claims there's a cover-up. After all, what better way to get the people to believe something than to issue an official denial entitled "Case Closed"? Now there's a conspiracy theory worth taking seriously. RRR

THE CONSTITUTION AND STATES RIGHTS

L. H. R., Jr.

Governor Fob James of Alabama is an unusual chief executive: he's interested in fundamental questions of political philosophy. In a sweeping and passionate 34-page memo now being circulated in the U.S. Congress–where it was hand delivered to every member–he explains the legal logic and moral imperative of states rights.

Nationalists believed that they had killed states rights long ago. But in a series of recent decisions, the Supreme Court has given a boost to the idea that the states retain some degree of political autonomy. Questions still remain: how much autonomy, and over what?

In a federalist system, states are not regional enforcement arms for the central government. In fact, states rights are, in Antonin Scalia's phrase, "one of the Constitution's structural protections of liberty." They are also, said Lord Acton, America's one great contribution to the political philosophy of freedom, something Mr. James recognizes.

The Court's recent opinions bolstering this view–most of them winning by a single vote–have been greeted with alarm by media commentators, historians, and law professors. Why are we talking about states rights 132 years after Appomattox?

In fact, the debate is far from over. After all, the states created the federal government, not visa versa. In the original republic, everyone used the term United States as a plural noun. Yet thanks to almost a century of bad court decisions, the states have been stripped of the right to decide basic questions of economic regulation, education, welfare policy, or the impact of religious symbols and rites on public life.

It was this last point that stirred Mr. James. Federal district judge Ira DeMent argued in a church-state matter that the U.S. Bill of Rights is "equally applicable as against the States." This is the infamous "incorporation doctrine," which permits the central government–the chief threat to individual rights–to presume to enforce these rights against the states.

Predictably, Mr. DeMent celebrates a very loose interpretation of the Constitution. He and his fellow judges, he said, are "disinterested, rational, and deliberate," and it is their business to "redefine" rights for "every generation." That goes especially for prayer in school, a right the courts have "re-defined" out of existence.

The incorporation doctrine is at odds with the system the framers established, and even contrary to the intentions of those who imposed the 14th amendment under military rule.

In fact, the incorporation doctrine–as Mr. James explains–by spinning out wild implications of the 14th amendment, has enabled big government to get ever bigger. The doctrine is at odds with the system the framers established, and even contrary to the intentions of those who imposed the 14th amendment under military rule.

The Bill of Rights ("*Congress* shall make no law...") is a restraint on the power of the central government. To allow the feds to remove this straitjacket, and fit it on the states, is a sure recipe for tyranny, as the framers understood. They had answered

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The Bill of Rights does not apply to the states. It was not intended to, and judges who say otherwise are imposing a constitution of their own invention.

the ancient question of "who guards the guardians?" with decentralized power among the states instead of a unitary leviathan.

As James Madison said, "the powers reserved to the several States will extend to all objects" that "concern the lives, liberties, and properties of the people," while the central government can only do what the Constitution says it can do, as restricted by the Bill of Rights.

Patrick Henry worried that the new Constitution would not explicitly protect religious freedom in the states against the federal government. But Madison answered that "there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion. Its least interference with it would be the most flagrant usurpation."

That's why, argues Mr. James, the federal government didn't dare interfere with the religious liberty of the states for so many years. As late as 1959, the Court noted that the 14th amendment is not "a short-hand incorporation of the first eight amendments." But in 1962 and 1963, the Supreme Court discovered an "implicit" federal right to regulate prayer at the state level, as if the first amendment had said "The states shall make no law...."

The issue isn't the law as such; it's the agent of enforcement. The fifty states also have Bills of Rights, and indeed the federal version was modeled on Virginia's. In the name of enforcing rights, the feds have grabbed power that doesn't belong to them. As Mr. James argues with poignant historical detail, the Bill of Rights does not apply to the states. It was not intended to, and judges who say otherwise are imposing a constitution of their own invention.

But now the contrary tradition has a spokesman again, and in a state with a history of resistance. The unraveling of consolidated government may begin once again in Alabama. RRR

DIXIE IN BEIJING

L. H. R., Jr.

In a glorious testament to free trade, the firecrackers we lit to celebrate Independence Day were all made in China. One of my favorites is the "Dixie Whistler." It's beautifully decorated with a Confederate flag, a symbol that is still beloved in the South and anywhere liberty is valued, but which has become so politically incorrect that U.S. companies fear putting it on their products. Praise be to China for keeping Dixie a living memory.

Yet once again, U.S. trade relations with China are coming under fire. This time the issue isn't human rights, trade deficits, or China's supposed regional military ambitions. The issue is campaign finance, specifically the Republican allegation that China conspired to influence the course of the 1996 elections by channeling money through the Commerce Department to the Democratic Party.

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The irony is bracing. There's not an election in the world the U.S. government isn't interested in influencing, often with cash. After the Second World War, an embryonic CIA used Marshall Plan aid to takeover virtually every Christian Democratic Party in Europe, dictating the candidates, the platform, and even the election outcomes. Indeed, the Cold War began over a 1947 election outcome in Greece that didn't please the Truman administration. This interventionist tradition extends to the present day. There's an entire federal agency, the National Endowment for Democracy, devoted to influencing foreign elections.

China is unfairly being made a victim of ideological hypocrisy. For the first time ever, that ancient civilization has embraced capitalistic institutions and is undergoing a world-historic economic boom, thanks to a shrinking government, dramatic tax cuts, foreign investment, and domestic capital accumulation. Now is the time for warm relations and commerce, not demonization and trade war.

Among other supposed crimes of the Chinese government, the Republicans claim it is, in the words of Senator Fred Thompson, trying to "establish relations" with state and local governments around the country. Maybe the Chinese are telling these officials about how to bring about economic growth. Given China's love of the Southern flag, interfering with "our" political system might be the greatest favor of all.

If the Republicans can succeed in showing that some U.S. officials broke some arcane campaign laws, fine, and may those who broke the law pay the requisite price. But that is not the real upshot of the hearings. The Republicans, in their never-ending desire to pay back the Democrats for Watergate, hope to bring down the Clinton administration. It's a worthy goal, to be sure, but it's also a great excuse for not doing what they were elected to do, which is curb Leviathan.

Ironically, it's Republican campaign finance that is driving this investigation. The GOP has found that whipping up public hysteria about the Red Peril is an effective fundraising tool. Conservative groups, nostalgic for the Cold War, are sending nutty direct mail letters to one and all, claiming that "communist" China seeks global domination.

The Christian right is piling on with wild claims of religious persecution in China, forgetting that it's the U.S. government that prevents prayer in schools. So churches in China have to register with the government or meet in homes to avoid government attention? Actually, that sounds like the U.S., where without non-profit insignia from the U.S. Treasury you're not a church, you're a criminal syndicate.

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So churches in China have to back the ruling regime? Well, American churches that oppose the ruling regime—Christian Identity, for example—haven't exactly gotten the kid-gloves treatment from the feds, not to mention the Branch Davidians. U.S. churches can and are penalized for not going along with the government. Allow the wrong kind of political speech from the pulpit (Bill Clinton, okay; David Duke, not okay), and prepare for years of investigation and possibly time in jail.

The Democrats have retaliated by pointing to a pile of cash that went from a Hong Kong company to the Republican National Committee through a policy group headed by former RNC Chairman Haley Barbour. It's a poignant accusation. Mr. Barbour has far more name recognition than any of the shadowy Commerce Department bureaucrats that the Republicans have dredged up.

But regardless, it would be a great tragedy if our trade relations with China were further damaged by the most elaborate plot to waste political time since the Whitewater inquiry. I don't doubt that every member of the Clinton administration is a criminal. But when the Crips criticize the Bloods as violence-prone, you have to look to deeper motives.

The analogy of late 1940s presents itself. After the 1946 election, when the Democrats suffered a devastating defeat in congressional races, the Truman administration was seeking some issue to regain the political momentum. A small group of political strategists and foreign policy specialists concocted a plan to make Russia, a nation driven into the ground by war and socialism, the object of a national hate campaign. The consequence of this political strategy was forty years of the costliest military buildup in human history.

Today, the U.S. stands at a crucial juncture. Will we be a nation of perpetual belligerence that refuses to let go of the Cold War mindset that there are always foreign monsters to slay? Or will we invite all nations into peaceful relations, and encourage mutually beneficial trade and commerce with all? It is in the interests of the American people to make sure their elected representatives choose the path of peace and commerce, as prescribed by the Framers.

The danger of the campaign-finance hearings is that they will result in new restrictions on trade with China. And then who will make the fireworks with the Dixie flag on them? No one, so long as the vaunted "Party of Lincoln" is in control. RRR

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